

REMARKS

The Office Action dated July 29, 2004 has been received and carefully considered. The above amendments and following remarks are being submitted as a full and complete response to the Office Action.

Initially, concerning the Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) submitted on November 14, 2003, the Examiner contends that Japanese citations 10-288286 and 9-257172 were not supplied with the IDS. In fact, all references indicated on the PTO-1449 form were supplied with the original IDS. It is noted that 10-288286 and 9-257172 are Japanese equivalent publications to the two U.S. citations, U.S. Patent No. 6,193,239 and U.S. Patent No. 5,951,060. Since the USPTO no longer scans or maintains paper copies of U.S. citations, and the Japanese citations may have been attached together with their corresponding U.S. publications, it is possible that the USPTO discarded the Japanese citations together with their equivalent U.S. publications, and thus, through USPTO error, the Japanese citations failed to be scanned into the Image File Wrapper (IFW).

Accordingly, as a corrective measure, the Japanese citations are being resubmitted concurrently with the present response, together with a new PTO-1449 form. Since the earlier submitted Japanese citations appear to have been discarded through USPTO error, resubmission of the Japanese citations does not constitute a new Information Disclosure Statement, and no fees are due in connection therewith.

As shown above, claim 1 has been amended to include the features of original claims 4 and 6. More specifically, amended claim 1 recites that the regulating element comprises an annular projection that protrudes a predetermined length from the end surface of the nut member toward the joint body, and the screwing amount of the nut member is regulated by abutment of the annular projection against an annular step of the joint body, the annular projection being plastically deformable so that the nut member is capable of being further screwed after the annular projection abuts against the annular step of the joint body, through compression and deformation of the annular projection.

It is respectfully submitted that the above features are not shown or suggested by the cited prior art, in that none of the cited references discloses an annular projection, as claimed, and certainly, none of the references even remotely suggests an annular projection that is plastically deformable, thereby allowing the nut member to be further screwed an additional distance after initial abutment of the annular projection against a step of the joint body, through compression and deformation of the annular member, as shown in FIG. 6 of the present specification. (See, page 16, line 5, through page 17, line 1.)

Claims 1-3 and 7-11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bawa et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,072,072) in view of Nishio (U.S. Patent No. 5,154,453).

Since claims 4 and 6 were not included in the above rejection, the Examiner recognizes that neither Bawa et al. nor Nishio provides any suggestion for an annular projection as

claimed. Accordingly, in light of the amendments to claim 1, incorporating the subject matter of claims 4 and 6, this rejection is rendered moot.

Claims 4 to 6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bawa et al. and Nishio, taken further in view of Hamburg (U.S. Patent No. 3,633,944).

While acknowledging that Bawa et al. and Nishio do not teach a regulating element having an annular projection, the Examiner asserts that an annular projection is disclosed in Hamburg, in particular referring to elements 47, shown in FIGS. 8 to 10, and discussed in column 3, lines 62-69 of the cited reference.

Elements 47 of Hamburg do not form an annular projection, but rather are constituted by "a number of bumps or projections 47." The projections 47 do not, individually or collectively, make up an annular projection (i.e., shaped like or forming a ring) that protrudes a predetermined length from an end surface of the nut member toward the joint body, as presently claimed. According to the cited reference, "[w]hen the cap is threaded upon the body, the first of the bumps to strike and pass over the body projection 34 (see dotted lines in FIG. 9) causes an audible click which signals that the cap is sufficiently tightened. This prevents overtightening and possible damage to the parts."

To produce the "audible click" as disclosed, when the bumps 47 strike the body projection 34, the bumps 47 clearly must be substantially rigid, and therefore there is no suggestion for such bumps to be plastically deformable. Clearly, there is no statement anywhere in the cited reference to suggest that the

bumps 47 are plastically deformable, wherein the nut member is capable of being further screwed through compression and deformation thereof, as is true of the claimed annular projection.

For the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that the claimed invention is not anticipated and would not have been obvious to a person skilled in the art at the time the present invention was made. Accordingly, reconsideration and allowance of amended claims 1-3, 5 and 7-11 is respectfully requested.

No fees are due. Notwithstanding, should it be deemed that fees, or deficiencies in fees, are required in connection with this or any accompanying communication, such amounts may be charged to the Attorney's Deposit Account No. 07-2519.

Respectfully submitted,



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